

BYU International Folk Dancers & Folk Ensemble

Historical Milestones

- 1956** The Brigham Young University International Folk Dancers is founded under the direction of Mary Bee Jensen. Fourteen Dancers present a performance at a ward banquet in Orem.
- 1959** The International Folk Dancers take their first tour. The travel to Montana from March 20-27. They also tour with Janie Thompson and the Program Bureau to California from March 20-28.
- Folk Dancers create their first float for Homecoming—a VW bus covered with international flags.
- The International Folk Dancers present a Folk Dance Festival concert in December.
- 1960** The first annual Christmas Around the World Concert is held in the Smith Fieldhouse.
- 1961** Helene Lysy comes from Canada as the first guest choreographer. She choreographs BYU's first Hopak.
- The Folk Dancers take their first European tour. They travel and perform for six weeks beginning in Denmark and continuing to Germany, Holland, Austria, Italy, France, and Belgium.
- 1966** The Folk Dancers take an 87-day tour to Europe, the longest tour in the history of the program.
- 1967** The Folk Dancers perform their first football half-time show.
- 1968** The Folk Dancers, selected as one of the top five groups from the last nine years, perform in the 10th anniversary of the Schoten, Belgium Folk Festival.
- 1971** The Folk Dancers perform in the Lincoln Center in New York.
- 1974** Mary Bee Jensen serves as the first American adjudicator for C.I.O.F.F.
- 1975** BYU hosts the first and only BYU International Folk Festival. Guests include groups from Japan, Israel, and Hawaii, the Tamburitizans, and BYU Folk Dancers.
- 1976** A tree is planted in Israel in honor of BYU Folk Dancers by the Jewish National Fund.
- BYU Folk Dancers present Israeli Trophy from the Municipality of Haifa to presidential delegates in the oval office of the White House as a token of friendship between the two countries.
- 1979** 171 million people view a performance of the International Folk Dancers taped in Moscow.
- 1981** Elder Boyd K. Packer and President Jeffery R. Holland accompany the International Folk Dancers on their first tour to the People's Republic of China.
- Pope John Paul II greets the Folk Dancers in St. Peter's Square.

1985 Mary Bee Jensen retires on stage in Copenhagen, Denmark, the country of the BYU Folk Dancer's first performance.

Edwin G. Austin takes over as director of the group.

Spring Performing Arts Company is officially organized.

1986 The International Folk Dancers officially become known as the International Folk Dance Ensemble.

1988 The Folk Dance Ensemble performs in the Opening Ceremonies of the Summer Olympic Games in Seoul, Korea.

1992 The Folk Dance Ensemble takes their first tour to South America.

1997 A new folk dance minor is approved in the Department of Dance.

The Folk Dance Ensemble is selected to perform in the 40th anniversary of the Confolens International Folk Festival in France. They are selected from all of the groups, worldwide, who have previously performed at this premiere European folk festival.

2001 The Folk Dance Ensemble is selected to perform in the 20th anniversary of the Festival Mondial, Quebec, Canada. They are selected from a history of twenty years of groups, worldwide, who have previously performed at this premiere festival.

2002 The Folk Dance Ensemble performs in the Opening Ceremonies of the Winter Olympic Games in Salt Lake City, Utah.

The Folk Dance Ensemble performs in *Light of the World*, a musical spectacular of the Winter Olympic Games produced by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Edwin G. Austin is selected as one of the dance choreographers.

2006 The Folk Dance Ensemble holds a 50th Anniversary Jubilee Celebration. Over 300 members, past and present, join together for three days to celebrate folk dance, music, tradition, and friendship.

2007 The Folk Dance Ensemble is selected to perform in the 50th anniversary of the Confolens International Folk Festival in France. They are selected from a history of fifty years of groups, worldwide, who have previously performed at this premiere European festival.